Missouri
Prairie/Grassland Community WHAG Model Instructions

Planned conditions should be based on when the contract expires or what you expect the site to look like 10 years from the initial evaluation.

Fields may be grouped by like management and grassland composition. Do not group fields to create a "weighted" average. A field converted to a more wildlife friendly vegetation/management than other fields evaluated should be assessed separately and not included with the other fields.

Prairie/Grassland:

(1a) Field Size:

- For the first part of this question, measure to any woody cover, including single tree lines, grazed timber, etc. You may use the openland category on sites where we know of prairie chickens or other T&E grassland birds, otherwise use edge.

(1b) Shrubby Cover:

- Measure the amount of the field within 660' of dense shrubby cover. Dense woody cover is defined as ungrazed shrubby cover, 3'-12' tall dense shrub thickets, edge-feathering or downed tree structures. The minimum size that qualifies is 30' by 50'.
- When completing this form in the office, confirm with producer the presence of dense woody/shrubby cover. To score points, shrubby cover must be ungrazed and lack dense grassy understory. Areas must be at least 30' in width and 1500 square feet to count. Look for presence in woody draws or fencelines in excess of 30' in width or ungrazed woodland. Count areas where you have personal knowledge that dense woody/shrubby cover is present. When working with producers, photos representing dense shrubby cover may help identify and distinguish acceptable areas. Shrubby cover not under the control of the landowner should not be counted (such as in right-a-ways, on neighbors….). Field verification is highly recommended. Shrubby cover will not count unless landowner can document or field office personal knowledge exists.
- Shrubby cover must be free of sod-forming grasses in order to be counted for this category (e.g. a dense dogwood thicket surrounded by tall fescue would not be considered useable shrubby cover).

(2) Desirable Forb/Legume Diversity: (summer conditions)

- This includes introduced legumes, native prairie forbs, and most 'weeds' (such as ragweed). Refer to 643, legumes rated good or excellent for wildlife in 327, common quail foods listed in the Missouri Bobwhite Quail Habitat Appraisal Guide (University of Missouri Extension (MP 902)) or contact your Area Biologist.
- It takes very diverse grassland to exceed 20 species of forbs. 40 species are typically found only in very good condition prairie. A well managed fescue pasture with legumes will generally have less than 10 species.
- A 643 seeding will usually have 20 or more species.

- Noxious weeds, sericea lespedeza, crown vetch, spotted knapweed, poison hemlock and horse nettle should not be included.
- The use of some herbicides can negatively impact forb diversity.

(3) Desirable Forb/Legume Canopy Coverage:

- Estimate the percent of the soil surface that is shaded by desirable forbs. If you were able to look at a square yard plot from overhead, estimate the percentage of the plot that is covered by desirable broadleaf plants. A CP33 mix would score 3 points. A livestock producer that places an emphasis on maintaining a 30% legume component in their pastures through grazing management and periodic reseeding of legumes may score 5 points. A cool season grass field with the primary purpose being hay production will likely score 0 or 3, depending on how and if legumes are managed.
- Most unmanaged grass pastures will have little or no forb/legume canopy coverage.
- Noxious weeds, sericea lespedeza, crown vetch, spotted knapweed, poison hemlock and horse nettle should not be included.
- Non-native legumes/forbs would not be considered desirable in a native grassland community (red clover in a native prairie), while it could be considered desirable in a planted pasture or hayfield. Use best judgment.

(4) Grassland Management:

- Any rotational (management intensive) system that would meet purposes 1, 2, and 3 of the 528 standard and management and follows table 1 of the standard (i.e. properly stocked, minimum grazing heights maintained, meets minimum number of pastures with water available in all, minimum and maximum grazing days are adhered to) would receive all 8 points in this category.
- Continuous graze- light to moderate use. One field is used continuously throughout the growing season at light to moderate stocking rates. Other fields may be available but due to limited water sources, gates remain open to allow access.
- Most commonly-managed CSG or CSG/legume hay fields will require leaving 10% of the field unmowed in order to score either 6 or 8 points. Idle/unmowed areas are to be left unused (year round) on an annual basis. They may be rotated in the field in subsequent years.
- Unmowed/unhayed strips must be a minimum of 30 feet wide and ideally located next to some other herbaceous or shrubby cover. Harvesting seed with mechanical equipment is considered the same as mowing. Idle/unmowed areas are to be left unused (year round) on an annual basis. They may be rotated in the field in subsequent years.
- Add 3 points when at least 10% of the evaluated grassland acres are annually rested (no grazing, mowing, haying, seed cutting or other mechanical disturbance) between May 1 and July 15.
- Add 9, 7, or 5 points depending on % of grassland acres that are burned, disked, or have grass suppressed (sprayed) annually.
- The primary purpose of the annual burning should be for benefiting wildlife, not for agricultural production.
- The 5 to >20% of the evaluated area could be the same land each year. In other words, if 5% is planned and scored, a different 5% does not have to special wildlife practices each year to earn the 5 points. However, for maximum wildlife benefits it may be recommended to move the management around. Management can be applied to

hayed/grazed areas as well as idled areas. Annual grain food plots would count as "annual disking".

(5) Grassland Composition:

- To receive the 15 points a mixed native grass and forb/legume grassland will contain at least three native grass species. A native grass specie must comprise at least 10% of the grassland composition to count as a specie in the mix. Desirable forbs and/or legumes shall comprise 10 to 75% of the canopy coverage to receive the 12 or15 points. A big bluestem and Indian grass hay field with 60% forb or legume canopy coverage would score 12 points.
- To qualify as wildlife friendly, 60% of the mix will be dominated by species having a good or excellent wildlife rating (see Table 2, 327 Conservation Cover Std.) to score 12 points. Fields dominated by species rated fair or lower will score lower. Any mixture with more than 25% of a specie rated poor for wildlife automatically drops to the next line.
- The 8 point option would capture fields dominated by species rated fair for wildlife habitat (Table 2, 327 Conservation Cover Std.), or with 25%-40% species rated poor for wildlife. An alfalfa or red clover hayfield, with limited grass, would score four points.
- A reed canarygrass, fescue, Bermuda, brome, or Old World bluestem monotype would score zero points.
- Field border will not affect overall composition.

(6) Introduced/Undesirable Species:

If any of these species represents 10% or more in the evaluated area, score zero points.